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**1962/10/21**

74. "Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba," 21 October 1962  
[briefing notes for Heads of Government]

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*Sanitized version  
of Briefing notes  
for Heads of  
Government*

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SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP  
IN CUBA

I. Now clear to US that Khrushchev last spring made foreign policy decision on Cuba which involved unprecedented risks and which made it undeniable that Soviets are playing for very high stakes indeed.

A. Soviets believed decisive action necessary because:

1. Cuban economy was deteriorating;
2. There seemed to be mounting pressure in the US for intervention.

B. Soviets also saw opportunity to:

1. Demonstrate that the US can no longer prevent advance of Soviet offensive power even in its own hemisphere;
2. Significantly expand Soviet capabilities for initial attack on US targets;
3. Thus weaken Western resolve and unity in countering Soviet moves in the East-West global contest, particularly over Berlin and Germany.

II. The Soviet decision has since been implemented in two phases:

A. First, the build-up during the summer of defensive capabilities;

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B. Second, the establishment this fall of a major Soviet base in Cuba for strategic attack on the US.

III. What we know about what the Soviets are actually doing in Cuba is based on hard intelligence from many sources:

- A. Repeated aerial photography of Cuba, which has been compared with a mass of aerial photography of the USSR;
- B. Photography of Soviet ships en route to Cuba from low-altitude aircraft and by surface observers in various locations;
- C. A firm knowledge, developed from many sources over the years, of Soviet military doctrine and practice;
- D. Interrogation in detail of the 1,500-2,000 refugees a week coming into Florida from Cuba;
- E. Agent operations.

IV. The first indication that the USSR had taken a decision on Cuba came in late July.

A. At that time, 4 Soviet passenger ships after a voyage under secrecy conditions arrived at the western Cuban naval base, Mariel. As of 20 October, fifteen such unpublicized passenger voyages have been counted.

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B. In early August, dry cargo vessels began arriving in unprecedented numbers.

1. Since then about 140 voyages--including the largest and newest of the Soviet merchant fleet--have been made or are in progress.
2. Of these, only about 15 were clearly not involved in delivering military cargo. About 100 have carried military equipment and the cargoes of the other twenty-five have not yet been established. (Soviet vessels carrying arms normally make false declarations of destination when passing the Bosphorus.)
3. Most of the Bloc cargoes supporting the Cuban civilian economy--which now requires assistance ranging from baby food and grain to machinery parts--is now moving in Western flag vessels.

C. The earlier deliveries, up to about 1 September, appeared to consist largely of military construction, transportation, and electronics equipment, and led to speculation that the Soviets might be deploying a SAM system.

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1. Photography of 29 August and 5 September confirmed that a SAM system was being deployed. Twelve sites were identified. One MIG-21 was seen, as were eight Komar-class missile boats and one land-based anti-shipping cruise missile site. During September the known number of each of these systems increased.
- D. In early September, consequently, we had ample evidence of a significant buildup. All confirmed deliveries, however, fitted into a pattern of weapons which are essentially defensive in design and in normal operational employment. On basis of such evidence President issued his statements of 4 and 13 September that Soviet activity in Cuba was defensive in nature.
- V. Our present knowledge of the state of these weapons in Cuba is as follows:
  - A. SAM sites (These are the standard Soviet six-launcher second-generation-type called in NATO terminology GUIDELINE).
    1. At least 24 sites, with alternate positions for several. These sites cover most of the island. Three or four more will cover the entire island.

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2. Support sites--six presently identified, still field-type, but signs of permanent-type installation appearing.
  3. Readiness--as of 17 October, 17 sites appeared--in photography--to have both missiles on launchers and the essential radar in position. Only one, however, has emplaced around it the radar-controlled guns which normally are installed to provide some defense against low-flying aircraft. Known radar emissions have thus far been very few. However, at least one site has the C-band radar--the latest Soviet model now being widely deployed in the USSR and East Germany. The sites were installed with haste. Revetments were built at most sites only after setting up.
- B. There are now about 100 MIG fighters in Cuba. About 60 15's, 17's and 19's arrived prior to 1 January '62, and there are now at least 39 MIG-21s.
1. Standard Soviet GCI units (one identified this far through photography) will control these fighters.
  2. While there is no direct evidence of air-to-air missiles in Cuba, such equipment is

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being supplied to Indonesia, Egypt, and probably to Iraq. We think it likely that Cuba will get at least equal treatment.

3. The MIG-21's have only recently become available. On 5 September we know that only one had been assembled. By 17 October, 35 had been assembled.

C. Coastal Defense.

1. We have identified 12 Komar-class patrol craft. Each carries two homing missiles, with a range of 10-15 n.m. and carrying 2,000-pound HE warheads. The first arrived in mid-August. All are now operational.
2. There are three coastal defense missile sites--two now operational. These anti-shiping missiles have a range of 35-40 miles and carry HE warheads.

VI. Soviet diplomacy and pronouncements have been carefully geared to military build-up; amounts to well-thought-out deception plan.

- A. Soviets wanted to keep international tensions down until build-up completed;

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- B. Have tried to keep attention focussed on Berlin - but with emphasis on lull till after US elections;
  - C. Emphasized defensive nature of Soviet support for Cuba as justified by provocative US threat;
  - D. Made connection between Berlin and Cuba as part of effort to demonstrate seriousness of Soviet commitment to Castro, but discreetly enough to avoid Western counteraction.
- VII. In early October we obtained our first hard information on the delivery of Soviet offensive weapons to Cuba.
- A. We photographed 10 crates on a ship bound for Cuba of a kind especially designed to contain the fuselage of an IL-28 jet light bomber.
  - B. 21 of these crates were later photographed at San Julian airfield in the extreme west of Cuba.
  - C. As of 17 October, four aircraft had been uncrated, of which one is partially assembled.

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VIII. The observation of IL-28 crates led us to mount an intensive reconnaissance effort, beginning on 15 October. The photography showed, for the first time, the deployment of surface-to-surface ballistic missile systems.

- A. We have identified four and possibly six sites for the 1,100-n.m. missile and two fixed sites for the 2,200-n.m. missile.

IX. 1,100-n.m. Missile:

- A. Two launch sites are near San Cristobal in Western Cuba. Each site normally has four launchers, of which we have seen seven. Each launcher in turn normally has two missiles assigned it, all sixteen of which we have identified at the site.
- B. Another two sites are near Sagua La Grande just east of Havana. We have identified six of the eight launchers and seven of the sixteen missiles.
- C. There is preliminary evidence of two additional sites near San Cristobal. They are either launch sites or a service facility.
- D. The keys to these identifications are the size of the missile body, the unique erector-launcher equipment, and the position and spacing of equipment.
1. The missile corresponds exactly in length to those observed in parades in Moscow.

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2. The handling equipment is similar to that photographed in the USSR.
  3. The spacing of launchers corresponds to that discussed in secret Soviet military documents and to that observed in known missile sites in the USSR.
- E. The 1,020-mile-range missile is a single-stage ballistic missile using storable liquid fuels.
1. It has an autonomous (i.e., all-inertial) guidance system giving a CEP of 1, to 1 1/2 nautical miles. It carries a warhead of 2,500-3,500 pounds, yielding 2-3 megatons.
- F. Photography alone cannot permit us to be very precise about the operational readiness of these missiles.
1. The sites at San Cristobal are the nearest to completion. We are inclined to believe that one of them could now have full operational readiness -- i.e.: an ability to launch four missiles with a refire capability within 4 to 6 hours --and that the other could achieve this status in about two days.
  2. The sites at Sagua La Grande will probably not achieve the same stage of construction until 1 November or later.

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X. 2,200-n.m. Missile:

- A. These sites are located at Guanajay, just west of Havana. They are fixed sites, and we have identified the eight launching pads normally associated with similar sites in the USSR. We have not yet seen the missiles.
- B. These sites are still in fairly early stage of construction which we do not expect to be completed until some time in December.
- C. We know less about the 2,200-mile missile, but believe it to be also single-stage, using storable liquid fuels and with an autonomous guidance system. We estimate CEP at 1 1/2 nautical miles. Warhead will probably yield 3-5 megatons.
- D. There is new evidence of the beginning of construction of what may be a new fixed four-pad MRBM or IRBM missile site at Remedias, East of Havana.

XI. We have no direct evidence that nuclear weapons are now in Cuba -- and we are not likely to get any.

- A. However, we are pretty sure that a facility being constructed near the IRBM site at Guanajay is a nuclear storage facility.

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- B. In any case it is prudent to assume that when the missiles are otherwise operational, nuclear warheads will be available.
- XII. Based on known voyages of ships, we believe at least 8,000 Soviet military and about 3,000 non-military personnel are now in Cuba.
  - A. This matches fairly well with our estimate that the Soviets would need about 10,000 military for the assembly activity now going on.
  - B. We think this total will rise to about 14,000 when all weapons systems now in Cuba are operational.
  - C. In addition, there are upward of 500 Soviet military advisers and technicians with the Cuban armed forces.
- XIII. In summary, Cuban-based missiles give the USSR a significantly increased capability for attack on targets in the U.S.
  - A. For retaliatory or second-strike purposes, Cuban-based missiles suffer by virtue of their soft configuration, being easily targeted, and being easily eliminated without reducing US forces now programmed against the USSR.
  - B. For pre-emptive or first strike purposes, Cuban missiles have an advantage over Soviet-

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based ICBM's -- shorter flight times and no  
BMEWS detection.

- C. Sites now identified will, when completed, give  
Soviets total of 36 launchers and 72 missiles.  
This compares with 60-65 ICBM launchers we now  
estimate to be operational in the USSR.

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